



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

OBJECTIVE . RELEVANT . RIGOROUS

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## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners in order to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

## West Point Releases First Issue of CTC Sentinel

THE COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point is privileged to present the *CTC Sentinel*, a new monthly online journal devoted to understanding and confronting contemporary threats posed by terrorism, insurgency and other forms of political violence. The *CTC Sentinel* draws from the Center's network of scholars and practitioners dedicated to the study of terrorism and counter-terrorism to provide the most well-informed forum for the analysis of these most pressing security challenges facing the United States and its allies.

The *CTC Sentinel* supports the Combating Terrorism Center's dual mission of educating a new generation of leaders and conducting objective, policy-relevant, informative and rigorous research of the highest standards geared both to the specialist and larger interested public. Reflecting the CTC's commitment both to academic excellence as well as to the military, law enforcement community and other practitioners in the field, the *CTC Sentinel* will include relevant scholarly research as well as articles with a more practical orientation. For example, each issue will feature an operational after-action report from military personnel returning from combat operations as well as a monthly chronology of significant terrorist incidents.

Leading this project is Erich Marquardt, who joins the CTC from The Jamestown Foundation, where he was the editor of *Terrorism Focus* and *Terrorism Monitor* and the Program Manager of Global Terrorism Analysis. The *Sentinel's* editorial board includes CTC Director of Research Dr. Jarret Brachman, Senior Research Fellow Dr. Assaf Moghadam and Senior Associate Brian Fishman.

The *CTC Sentinel* is one of several new initiatives that we are pleased to announce. Early next year, the CTC will launch an entirely redesigned website, which will feature an interactive tool for searching our growing collection of Harmony

documents. We also look forward to releasing two major reports this spring, including a historical study of failed jihadist movements and our *Shi'a Ideology Atlas*.

With the recent passing of our Distinguished Chair, General Wayne A. Downing, we would like to dedicate this inaugural issue to him. As General Downing used to remind the Center's faculty—only slightly adjusting the motto of the British SAS—"Who thinks wins." We hope you will find the *CTC Sentinel* to be a valuable resource that informs your thinking and enhances our collective understanding of the persistent challenges facing the United States and its allies by terrorist and insurgent groups.

LTC(P) Joseph Felter, Ph.D.  
Director, Combating Terrorism Center  
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### REPORTS

#### Abu Mus`ab al-Suri's Critique of Hard Line Salafists in the Jihadist Current

By Brynjar Lia

THE RECENT SCHOLARLY literature on al-Qa`ida has focused on studying internal divisions and ideological schisms in the global jihadist current.<sup>1</sup> This literature has uncovered important fault lines with regard to al-Qa`ida's priorities on issues such as media and propaganda efforts versus military organization. Differences over the primacy of religious-theological purity versus military-strategic effectiveness have also come to light.

<sup>1</sup> Vahid Brown, *Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in Al-Qa`ida 1989-2006* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007), available at [www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aq3.asp](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aq3.asp); Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

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This article aims at contributing to this literature by discussing the clash between ideological purists and military strategists in al-Qa`ida as seen through the writings of one of al-Qa`ida's most articulate and prolific writers, Mustafa bin `Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasar, better known by his pen names Abu Mus`ab al-Suri and `Umar `Abd al-Hakim.<sup>2</sup> Until his arrest presumably in Quetta, Pakistan in late 2005, al-Suri was one of the most outspoken voices in the jihadist current. His critical analysis of previous jihadist experiences, especially on Algeria, provoked strong responses and debates. Furthermore, his ambitions to integrate Marxist guerrilla warfare theory into the jihadist war fighting doctrine, to introduce self-criticism as an accepted genre and method in jihadist thinking and his attempts to critically analyze the jihadist current "objectively" inevitably led to numerous clashes with orthodox and conservative elements, especially the strong Salafist current in al-Qa`ida.

#### Salafism

While the term Salafism is historically associated with a late 19th and early 20th century Islamic reformist movement, today's Salafists are very different. Their main characteristic is their strict emulation of the practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions at the pristine Islamic age, and hence an abhorrence of any later "innovation" (*bid`a*) in belief and religious practice, an obsession with God's oneness (*tawhid*), a rejection of human rationality and an extreme exclusiveness, even hatred, toward other Islamic schools and tendencies.<sup>3</sup> Even if only a small segment of today's Salafists support al-Qa`ida, the term "Salafi-jihadism" has nevertheless been latched to al-Qa`ida both by outsiders and by jihadist ideologues themselves.

A common categorization of Salafism is Quintan Wiktorowicz's typology that divides Salafism into three currents: purists, politicians and jihadists, united by a common Salafist creed, but sharply divided on how to interpret the context and reality in which the creed should be implemented.<sup>4</sup> While a useful starting point, the typology provides

little guidance in terms of understanding doctrinal disputes and conflicts within the jihadist current itself.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it may misleadingly identify contemporary jihadists as simply radicalized elements within, or as by-products of, a broader Salafist phenomenon. Instead, it may be more fruitful to speak of Salafism as one of several competing ideological strands within the jihadist current. Furthermore, one may identify a spectrum, or a continuum, of positions within the contemporary Salafi-jihadism, defined by two extreme positions.

On the one extreme are hard line Salafist purists for whom doctrinal purity is of quintessential importance, even if it means fighting side battles, alienating allies and shattering any semblance of a common front against the "Zionist-Crusader" enemy. At the other extreme are hard line jihadists, who are primarily military strategists, and whose main preoccupation is political outcome, not doctrinal purity.

Abu Mus`ab al-Suri belongs to the latter category. Even though he himself was born into a Syrian Sufi family (the Rifa'iyyah order in Aleppo), he came to adopt and defend Salafist doctrines in his writings, but he did this only because it was the best strategy in the current times. From his writings, it becomes apparent that had he been born 20 years earlier, al-Suri would have fought equally hard under Marxist or pan-Arab slogans. He styled himself as a writer, theorist and strategist, not as a Muslim cleric. Together with many other leading jihadists, Abu Mus`ab al-Suri clashed with "purist Salafist" elements in al-Qa`ida on a number of occasions. While the specific issues varied

5 For the purpose of this article, Abu Mus`ab al-Suri's own definition will suffice. He defined the jihadist current rather comprehensively, determined partly by ideology and partly by its main enemies: "It comprises organizations, groups, assemblies, scholars, intellectuals, symbolic figures and the individuals who have adopted the ideology of armed jihad against the existing regimes in the Arab-Islamic world on the basis that these are apostate regimes ruling by not what Allah said (*bi-ghayr ma anzala Allah*), by legislating without Allah, and by giving their loyalty and assistance to the various infidel enemies of the Islamic nation. The jihadist current has also adopted the program of armed jihad against the colonialist forces which attack Muslim lands on the basis that those regimes are allies fighting Islam and Muslims." See `Umar `Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus`ab al-Suri), *The Global Islamic Resistance Call. Part I: The Roots, History, and Experiences. Part II: The Call, Program and Method* (Arabic) (Place and publisher unknown, December 2004), p. 685. Hereafter cited as *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*.

greatly, they all revolved around the general dilemma of how to strike a balance between ideological purity vs. political utility.

These clashes suggest that the spread of purist Salafist doctrines in the jihadist current from the 1980s onwards has not been a source of strength and renewal, but instead constituted a considerable obstacle to jihadist mobilization, and has more often than not served to handicap and cripple jihadist groups by embroiling them in schisms and internal conflicts.

There are reasons why jihadist ideologues like al-Suri came to use such vitriolic and harsh words about leading Salafist clerics. Al-Qa`ida's struggle against the United States and its European and Arab allies—Saudi Arabia, in particular—has always

### **"He styled himself as a writer, theorist and strategist, not as a Muslim cleric."**

depended on a minimum of political-religious legitimation, which explains why there is far more literature on jihadist websites dealing with the question "why jihad?" than "how jihad?"<sup>6</sup>

Since the mid-1990s, leading Salafist clerics from Saudi Arabia and Yemen have refuted Usama bin Ladin's message and defended their regimes against jihadist propaganda. Al-Suri took considerable interest in these disputes, and he authored a long study that detailed and analyzed Bin Ladin's and the London-based Saudi dissident leader Saad al-Faqih's criticism of Shaykh Abdul Aziz bin Baz and Shaykh Mohammed bin Salah bin `Uthaymin, two of Saudi Arabia's most famous scholars.<sup>7</sup> Seeing himself not as a religious cleric who could challenge the clerics on their turf, al-

2 For his biography, see Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qa`ida Strategist Abu Mus`ab al-Suri* (London & New York: Hurst and Columbia University Press, 2007).

3 Bernard Haykel, "Radical Salafism: Osama's Ideology," *Dawn*, 2001.

4 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29:3 (2006): pp. 207-239.

6 Brynjar Lia, "Al-Qaeda Online: Understanding Jihadist Internet Infrastructure," *Jane's Intelligence Online*, January 2006.

7 `Umar `Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus`ab al-Suri), *The Testimony of the Leaders of the Mujahidin and the Reform [Current] about the Sultan's Clerics in the Land of the Two Holy Places, Called Saudi Arabia: A Reading and Commentary of the Letters and Communiqués by Shaykh Usama bin Ladin and Doctor Saad al-Faqih to Shaykh bin Baz, Shaykh bin `Uthaymin and the Clerics of the Land of the Two Holy Places* (Arabic) (Kabul: The Ghuraba Center for Islamic Studies and Media, January 31, 2001).

Suri found it most useful to launch his attack through the words of the two most well-known Saudi dissidents, one from the reformist camp and the other from the jihadist camp. The intended audience was clearly jihadist sympathizers and recruits who were hesitant to join al-Qa`ida without necessary religious legitimization. This is also what concerned al-Suri the most with regard to the negative role played by “the purist Salafists.” Their clerics “mislead the mujahidin” and turned them away from the battlefield by preaching loyalty to corrupt rulers who had allied themselves with the infidels.

The reason why anti-Bin Ladin rhetoric by leading Salafist scholars had such resonance among al-Qa`ida's core recruitment base was that the jihadist movement did not have a well-established and unified ideological foundation separate from the Salafist school; its ideological character was multifaceted, evolving and open to new influences. In al-Suri's analysis, the jihadist current's ideology derived from a variety of sources. It was “a mixture of jihadist Qutbist organizational ideology, the Salafist creed and the Wahhabite call.”<sup>8</sup> While Qutbism had been dominant until the 1980s, doctrinal Salafism and Wahhabite theology had begun to make an impact during Arab participation in the Afghan liberation war during the 1980s. Its influence on the jihadist current has grown ever since.<sup>9</sup>

### Salafism as a Source of Internal Discord and Conflict

Abu Mus`ab al-Suri witnessed with unease the growing influence of Salafist hard line ideologues in al-Qa`ida. Historically, doctrinal disputes within the Sunni faith had bred “partisan fanaticism” and caused “bloodshed, conspiracies and internecine fighting” on a grand scale.<sup>10</sup> While these schismatic battles were somewhat contained during the anti-colonialist struggles in the 18th and 19th centuries, they had now reemerged with full force, according to al-Suri, due to the growing power of the “Salafist trend.”<sup>11</sup> Al-Suri depicted the Salafists as the

most conflict prone of all. He said that they are a sect at war with “nearly every other revivalist school.”<sup>12</sup> Al-Suri considered the Salafists as a liability and would rather be without them and their doctrinal feuds. That is unfortunately not an option, however, because, as al-Suri pointed out, “most of the jihadists chose the Salafist doctrine, jurisprudence and program”; in this way, “the problem came to us, eventually.”<sup>13</sup>

Al-Suri viewed the various conflicts emanating from the disputes over Salafist doctrine as a significant security hazard for the jihadist movement, and a considerable threat to the movement as a whole:

It causes internal strife among Muslims and within the resistance movement itself at a time when we are being invaded by the American and Zionist Mongols and their war machines, and at a time when their satellites are eavesdropping on our ideological murmurs and monitoring our daily movements...<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the arrogant exclusiveness propagated by Salafist doctrinarians has led to the inability of the jihadist current to form alliances and cooperative relationships with other Islamic militants.<sup>15</sup> The Salafist presence in the jihadist current created in reality an incompatibility of strategic proportion since “the resistance has to be popular, meaning a complete participation of all sects of the population, inclusive of all of its multiple diverse groups” if it were to succeed.<sup>16</sup>

Al-Suri also found that the Salafists shared the responsibility for the spread of *takfiri* (excommunication) ideas and practices within the jihadist current. He repeatedly refuted the notion that the mainstream jihadist ideology “has merged with *takfirism*,” as is often argued by jihadist opponents, but he did concede that hard line Salafist interpretations and practices “led in turn to a narrowing of the margin between the jihadists and the *takfirist* trend,” a weakness which has been amply exploited by the enemy.<sup>17</sup> Since the rise of modern political Islamism in the first half of the 20th century, the issue of *takfir* has probably been the most divisive one of all. Therefore, al-Suri's criticism here is quite significant.

### Hard Line Salafists in London and Afghanistan

The adoption of hard line Salafist positions by leading jihadists led to several important leadership schisms. In the mid-1990s, a serious conflict erupted between Abu Mus`ab al-Suri and Abu Qatada al-Filistini, who were then the two main ideologues behind the *al-Ansar Newsletter* in London, the mouthpiece of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria and probably the most prominent jihadist journal at that time. Al-Suri was gradually estranged because Abu Qatada's hard line Salafist supporters gained control over the GIA media unit. He later recalled in his memoirs how people like him were denounced as politicians and even heretics by the Salafists:

In their eyes, we were only activists (*barakiyyun*), who theorized in politics. We were not clean of the Muslim Brotherhood virus, despite the fact that we were among the jihadists. We did not understand the issues of Islamic doctrine!!<sup>18</sup>

The clash between military jihadist pragmatists and hard line Salafists was also manifest in Afghanistan, the main playing field for the jihadists since the late 1980s.<sup>19</sup> There were significant differences in religious observance and practices between the Arab volunteer fighters, many of whom were observant Salafists, and the Afghan resistance, who by and large observed the Hanafi school and were tolerant of Sufi shrines and other practices that Salafists regarded as godless “innovation” in Islam. This had been a problem during the first Arab-Afghan experience from the mid-1980s to c.1992, and no less so during the “second round” following the Taliban's seizure of power in 1996 until its downfall in late 2001.

Hence, a significant segment of the Arab-Afghan community in Afghanistan mistrusted the Taliban on purely religious grounds, which came on top of their outspoken contempt for Afghanistan's general backwardness and primitiveness. The Arab-Afghans soon became embroiled in tense ideological disputes over whether the Taliban regime should be considered an Islamic emirate, for which it would make it worth fighting and to which emigration was obligatory. Many Arab militants who had moved to Afghanistan simply considered the Taliban regime just another temporary safe haven

8 *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, p. 697.

9 True to his pedagogical, tutorial style of writing, al-Suri summed up the basic components and elements of the jihadist current in this neat mathematical equation: “Some basic elements from the Muslim Brotherhood ideology + The organizational program of Sayyid Qutb + The legal-political doctrine of Imam ibn Taymiyah and the Salafiyya school + The jurisprudential and doctrinal heritage of the Wahhabite call ----> The political legal organizational program for the jihadist current.” Ibid., p. 698.

10 Ibid., p. 1060.

11 Ibid., p. 1060.

12 Ibid., p. 1060.

13 Ibid., p. 1060.

14 Ibid., p. 1060.

15 Ibid., p. 846.

16 Ibid., p. 846.

17 Ibid., p. 842.

18 Ibid., p. 31.

19 This section draws heavily on Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad*, pp. 239-245.



from which they might train their members and reorganize their forces in preparation for an armed campaign in their home countries. For them, the Taliban regime could never become a starting point for the coming Islamic caliphate. Therefore, fighting alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance was not a religious duty. Among the hard line Salafists in the Arab-Afghan community, the criticism of the Taliban went much further. They argued that it was utterly impermissible to fight alongside the Taliban regime because it meant fighting under an infidel banner.

In his books, al-Suri wrote at length describing the destructive role played by the Salafist hardliners in Afghanistan. The Salafists' contempt for the Taliban and other non-Salafist mujahidin fighters knew no boundaries:

One of the astonishing things I must mention in this context is a statement made by one of those extremist Salafi-jihadists. He told me in one of our conversations that "jihad must be under the Salafist banner; its leadership, program and religious rulings must also be Salafist...If we should accept that non-Salafists participate with us in jihad, we only do so because we need them. However, they should not have any leadership role at all. We should lead them like a herd of cows to perform their duty of jihad." I couldn't really understand how we are going to participate in jihad with our brethren in religion and faith if we should deal with them as a herd of cows...!<sup>20</sup>

Obviously, such contemptuous attitudes opened up serious cleavages in the Arab-Afghan diaspora regarding the future course of action, especially with regard to their position on the Taliban.

In Afghanistan, al-Suri became known as one of the Taliban's most faithful defenders against the Salafists. Al-Suri had always displayed pragmatism and leniency vis-à-vis non-adherence to the strict Salafist code of conduct as long as the zeal and determination to fight a jihad was beyond doubt. He found this among the Taliban.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

Al-Suri's critique of the Salafists in the jihadist current has highlighted interesting ideological cleavages inside al-Qa`ida and contemporary jihadism, which often tend to be overlooked since most jihadist writers avoid the topic or phrase it in such obfuscated language that it becomes unintelligible to outsiders.

There is little doubt that doctrinaire Salafist influences have profoundly altered the ideological character of the jihadist current since the early 1990s, following decades of Qutbist dominance in militant Islamic rhetoric. The rise of Salafist discourses and doctrines has in many ways reduced the political content in contemporary jihadist ideology and weakened its ability to provide formulas for alliances with other political forces. Indeed, perhaps the most important element in al-Suri's critique of the Salafists is their exclusiveness and eagerness to engage in side battles with "deviancy" and "un-Islamic sects." By the very presence of these ideological elements at the heart of the jihadist current, this global insurgent movement is bound to have limited popular appeal and is destined to remain what Abu Mus`ab al-Suri did not want it to become, namely "elitist," "marginal" and doomed to failure.

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## Countering Terrorist Use of the Web as a Weapon

By Bruce Hoffman

*This article is excerpted from the author's testimony, titled, "Using the Web as a Weapon: The Internet as a Tool for Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism," that was presented to The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment, on November 6, 2007.*

TERRORISM HAS LONG been understood to be a violent means of communication. The terrorist act itself is thus deliberately designed to attract attention and then, through the publicity that it generates, to communicate a message. Indeed, nearly a quarter of a century ago, Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf observed that, "Without communication there can be no terrorism."<sup>1</sup> But communication is essential for a terrorist movement not just to summon publicity and attention, but also to promote its longevity and ensure its very survival. Without an effective communications strategy, a terrorist movement would be unable to assure a continued flow of new recruits into its ranks, motivate and inspire existing members as well as expand the pool of active supporters and passive sympathizers from which terrorism also draws sustenance.

Given this constellation of requisite sustainable resources—motivated minions, energized recruits, generous supporters and willing sympathizers—it is not surprising that terrorists today devote so much time and energy to communications. That they have fastened on the internet as an especially efficacious vehicle for this purpose—given its rapid (often in real time), pervasive geographical reach, and cost-effective characteristics—is not surprising either.<sup>2</sup> As Professor Gabriel Weimann of Haifa University notes in his seminal study, *Terror on the Internet*, when he began studying this phenomenon nearly a decade ago, there were only about 12 terrorist group websites. By the time he completed his research in 2005,

20 *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, pp. 844-45.

21 Due to his conflict with Bin Ladin, he could obviously not afford to also be on bad terms with the Afghan government, but there was clearly a strong ideological component behind his decision. Abdel Bari Atwan, the Arab news editor who met with al-Suri several times during the mid- and late-1990s, recalls that al-Suri telephoned

him in 1997 or 1998 saying that he had stopped working for al-Qa`ida, and that instead he now served as media adviser for the Taliban. Personal interview, Abdel Bari Atwan, London, April 28, 2006.

1 Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf, *Violence As Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1982), p. 9.

2 For a more detailed analysis of historical terrorist communications strategies and their contemporary use of the internet and other electronic and digital communications means, see Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 173-228.

the number had grown to over 4,300—"a proliferation rate," he explains, "of about 4,500 percent per year."<sup>3</sup> And, by the time the book was published the following year, the number had jumped to more than 5,000 terrorist websites.<sup>4</sup> Today, the number of terrorist and insurgent sites is believed to have increased to some 7,000.

Thus, virtually every terrorist group in the world today has its own internet website and, in many instances, maintains multiple sites in

## **"Al-Qa`ida may be compared to the archetypal shark in the water that must keep moving forward."**

different languages with different messages tailored to specific audiences. The ability to communicate in real time via the internet, using a variety of compelling electronic media—including dramatic video footage, digital photographs and audio clips accompanied by visually arresting along with savvy and visually appealing web design—has enabled terrorists to reach a potentially vast audience faster, more pervasively and more effectively than ever before.

The weapons of terrorism today, accordingly, are no longer simply the guns and bombs that they always have been, but now include the mini-cam and videotape, editing suite and attendant production facilities; professionally produced and mass-marketed CD-ROMs and DVDs; and, most critically, the laptop and desktop computers, CD burners and e-mail accounts, and internet and worldwide web. Indeed, largely because of the internet—and the almost unlimited array of communications opportunities that it offers—the art of terrorist communication has now evolved to a point where terrorists can effortlessly and effectively control the communication of their ideology of hate, intolerance and violence: determining the content, context and medium over which their message is projected; and toward precisely the audience (or multiple audiences) they seek to reach.

3 Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2006), p. 105.

4 Remarks by Professor Gabriel Weimann, book launch event held at the U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C. on April 17, 2006.

The changing face of terrorism in the 21st century is perhaps best exemplified by the items recovered by Saudi security forces in a raid on an al-Qa`ida safe house in Riyadh in late spring 2004. In addition to the traditional terrorist arsenal of AK-47 assault rifles, explosives, rocket-propelled grenades, hand grenades and thousands of rounds of ammunition that the authorities expected to find, they also discovered an array of electronic consumer goods including: video cameras, laptop computers, CD burners, and the requisite high-speed internet connection. According to 60 Minutes investigative journalist Henry Schuster, the videos

had been part of an al-Qa`ida media blitz on the web that also included two online magazines full of editorials and news digests, along with advice on how to handle a kidnapping or field-strip an AK-47 assault rifle. The videos mixed old appearances by bin Laden with slick graphics and suicide bombers' on-camera last wills and testaments. They premiered on the internet, one after the other, and were aimed at recruiting Saudi youth.<sup>5</sup>

As Tina Brown, the doyenne of post-modern media, has pointed out: the "conjunction of 21st-century internet speed and 12th-century fanaticism has turned our world into a tinderbox."<sup>6</sup>

The implications of this development have been enormous. The internet, once seen as an engine of education and enlightenment, has instead become an immensely useful vehicle for terrorists with which to peddle their baseless propaganda and manifold conspiracy theories and summon their followers to violence.<sup>7</sup> These sites alarmingly present an increasingly compelling and indeed accepted alternative point of view to the terrorists' variegated audiences. This was of course precisely al-Qa`ida's purpose in creating its first website, [www.alneda.com](http://www.alneda.com), and maintaining a variety of successor sites ever since: to provide an alternative source for news and information

5 Henry Shuster, "Studios of Terror: Al-Qa`ida's Media Strategy," CNN, February 16, 2005.

6 Tina Brown, "Death by Error," *Washington Post*, May 19, 2005.

7 See, for instance, the "Iraq" tab at [www.kavkazcenter.com](http://www.kavkazcenter.com) and the "Iraqi Resistance Report" tab at [www.jihadunspun.com](http://www.jihadunspun.com) as well as sites such as [www.islammemo.cc/taqrer/one\\_news.asp?Idnew=292](http://www.islammemo.cc/taqrer/one_news.asp?Idnew=292); [www.la7odood.com](http://www.la7odood.com); [www.balagh.com/thaqafa/O604ggpz.htm](http://www.balagh.com/thaqafa/O604ggpz.htm); and [www.albasrah.net](http://www.albasrah.net). All of the preceding sites were accessed on July 6, 2005.

that the movement itself could exert total control over. Identical arguments—claiming distortion and censorship by Western and other mainstream media—have also been voiced by sites either created by the Iraqi insurgent groups themselves or entities sympathetic to them.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the internet has become for terrorists a "virtual" sanctuary to compensate for the loss of their physical sanctuaries and continue to provide information on training and instruction in the means and methods of planning and executing terrorist attacks. Finally, the internet's power to radicalize—to motivate, inspire, animate and impel radicals to violence—has been repeatedly demonstrated in the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

In these respects, al-Qa`ida's capacity to continue to prosecute its war against the United States and the movement's other assorted enemies is a direct reflection of both the movement's resiliency and the continued resonance of its ideology and effectiveness of its communications. Al-Qa`ida may be compared to the archetypal shark in the water that must keep moving forward—no matter how slowly or incrementally—or die. In al-Qa`ida's context, this means adapting and adjusting to even our most consequential counter-measures while simultaneously searching to identify new targets and vulnerabilities and continuing to replenish its ranks with new recruits as well as sympathizers and supporters.

In sum, defeating al-Qa`ida requires a strategy that relies on effectively combining the tactical elements of systematically destroying and weakening its capabilities alongside the equally critical, broader strategic imperatives of countering the continued resonance of the movement's message and breaking the cycle of terrorist recruitment and replenishment that has both sustained and replenished al-Qa`ida. But, today, Washington has no such strategy in the war on terrorism. America's counter-terrorism campaign continues to assume that America's contemporary enemies—be they al-Qa`ida or the insurgents in Iraq—

8 "Western Propaganda Media try to shut down albasrah.net! [sic]," the banner on one such site, [www.albasrah.net](http://www.albasrah.net), asserted in 2005. "Once again," it argued, "the propaganda media have begun to spew stupid accusations against al-Basrah, the true aim of which is to smother the voice of Iraqi people and smother one of the few sources of information on the unprecedented massacres that are taking place inside occupied Iraq in the name of 'international law,'" [www.albasrah.net](http://www.albasrah.net), accessed on July 6, 2005.

have a traditional center of gravity. It also assumes that these enemies simply need to be killed or imprisoned so that global terrorism or the Iraqi insurgency will both end. Accordingly, the attention of the U.S. military and intelligence community is directed almost uniformly toward hunting down militant leaders or protecting U.S. forces—not toward understanding the enemy we now face. This is a monumental failing not only because decapitation strategies have rarely worked in countering mass mobilization terrorist or insurgent campaigns, but also because al-Qa`ida's ability to continue this struggle is ineluctably predicated on its capacity to attract new recruits and replenish its resources.

The success of U.S. strategy will therefore ultimately depend on Washington's ability to counter al-Qa`ida's ideological appeal and thus effectively address the three key elements of al-Qa`ida's strategy:

- The continued resonance of their message.
- Their continued ability to attract recruits to replenish their ranks.
- Their stubborn capacity for continual regeneration and renewal.

To do so, we first need to better understand the mindset and minutia of the al-Qa`ida movement, the animosity and arguments that underpin it and indeed the regions of the world from which its struggle emanated and upon which its hungry gaze still rests. Without knowing our enemy we cannot successfully penetrate their cells; we cannot knowledgeably sow discord and dissension in their ranks and thus weaken them from within; we cannot effectively counter their propaganda and messages of hate and clarion calls to violence; and, we cannot fulfill the most basic requirements of an effective counter-terrorist strategy: preempting and preventing terrorist operations and deterring their attacks. Until we recognize the importance of this vital prerequisite, America will remain perennially on the defensive: inherently reactive rather than proactive, deprived of the capacity to recognize, much less anticipate, important changes in our enemy's modus operandi, recruitment and targeting.

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## Al-Qa`ida Losing Ground in Iraq

By Mohammed M. Hafez

AL-QA`IDA IN IRAQ (AQI) has snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by turning nationalist insurgents and tribes against it. AQI made two mistakes that might prove fatal. The first was its encroachment on tribal interests, and the second was its attempt to monopolize leadership in the insurgency by declaring an Islamic state in Iraq. The first mistake compelled the tribes to terminate their welcome of foreign jihadists and violently expel the extremists, while the second turned nationalist insurgents into fierce critics of AQI's "alien" agenda.

### Al-Qa`ida vs. Iraqi Tribes

Tribes in Iraq, generally speaking, are known for being socially conservative, but they are not given to ideological projects promoted by radical Islamists. AQI alienated the tribes of western Iraq by imposing on them an oppressive fundamentalism, infringing on their economic turf, preventing them from establishing their own police forces and engaging in coercive extraction of "war taxes." As early as 2004, foreign jihadists—mainly from Saudi Arabia—began to impose puritanical rules on already religiously conservative tribes. These edicts, for example, outlawed music and satellite dishes, and demanded that women in public be covered in

black from head to toe.<sup>1</sup>

Iraqi tribes also resented AQI's infringement on their livelihood. A good example is AQI's conflict with the Albu Risha tribe in Anbar Province. This tribe has long benefited from its proximity to the international road leading from Baghdad to Amman, passing through Anbar. The road is used by travelers, traders and transporters. During the sanctions years (1991-2003), Albu Risha tribesmen provided many of the smugglers and transporters who used the road. They also engaged in extortion and outright thievery against businessmen and transport drivers.<sup>2</sup> The presence of many insurgent groups, including AQI, on important portions of the international road had cut into the business and profits of the Albu Risha tribe. Insurgents used this vital road to extract fees from transporters, kidnap individuals for ransom and even kill people based on their identity. The Albu Risha tribe had much to lose if AQI remained in control.

In addition to being affected financially, AQI prevented the Albu Risha tribe from receiving contracts and bidding for local development projects from coalition forces. It also challenged the decision of tribes to send their sons into the local police forces. AQI guaranteed a death sentence to anyone who cooperated with the occupiers. Whereas some insurgents would allow individuals to contract with Americans in exchange for a share of the revenues, or allowed some to enter the police to provide local security and possibly spy for the insurgents, AQI rejected any forms of collaboration with the occupation and harshly treated tribesmen seeking to make a living through such cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

In 2004, AQI killed Albu Risha tribesmen that took contracts from coalition forces, including Shaykh Bazi`a al-Rishawi, the father of Shaykh `Abd al-Sattar Abu Risha, the future founder of the Anbar Salvation Council (ASC). It also killed `Abd al-Sattar's younger brother, Muhammad, and kidnapped

1 Karl Vick, "Insurgent Alliance is Fraying in Fallujah; Locals, Fearing Invasion, Turn Against Foreign Arabs," *Washington Post*, October 13, 2004; Ellen Knickmeyer, "Zarqawi Followers Clash with Local Sunnis," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2005.

2 Mushriq Abbas, "Mutual Political and Tribal Interests Coincided with His Struggle with al-Qa`ida and al-Maliki: A Short and Murky Journey Led [ `Abd al-Sattar] Abu Risha to George Bush...and Few Days Later to His Death" (Arabic), *al-Hayat*, September 16, 2007.

3 Hamam Hassan, "Saddam was the First to Attract Islamic Organizations and Later Regretted it" (Arabic), *al-Hayat*, February 25, 2006.



two of his brothers, Abdullah and Ali. These transgressions required vengeance in the Arab tribal code.<sup>4</sup>

Shaykh `Abd al-Sattar formed the ASC with approximately 100 men and started detaining and killing several AQI commanders and cadres. The ASC attracted money from U.S. forces in order to build up a local police force to combat AQI. It was easy for the ASC to hunt down AQI because the latter operated in the open. It was equally easy, however, for AQI to identify members of the ASC to carry out assassinations and bombings against them.<sup>5</sup> AQI assassinated key figures such as Shaykh Hikmat Mumtaz al-Bazi, head of the Samarra tribal council, and Shaykh Kamal al-Nazzal, head of the local council in Falluja, for brokering dialogue with the government.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, AQI succeeded in killing Shaykh `Abd al-Sattar himself. By sealing his fate, AQI may have sealed its own as well.

Killing these individuals, and the escalating fight with the ASC, had three effects. First, tribal heads had to seek revenge against the killers in accordance with their tribal customs. Second, it gave the United States an opening to reach out to the tribes against a common enemy. The United States was willing to give money and material support to anyone who fought AQI. The tribes, in turn, were looking for a pretext to benefit from coalition money without appearing as illegitimate collaborators with the occupation. Today, there are “awakening councils” in nearly all provinces and cities in which AQI operates.<sup>7</sup>

The third, and perhaps most important, effect of AQI’s war on the tribes is that it has forced nationalist insurgents to choose sides. Many of the nationalist insurgents are from the tribes and depend on them for protection, shelter and political support. While they may have wished to stay neutral, AQI’s brutal treatment of tribal dissenters meant that the Iraqi nationalists had to protect their base of mass support.

4 Abbas, “Mutual Political and Tribal Interests.”

5 Ibid.; Khloud al-Aamiri, “The [al-Qa`ida] Organization is Declining and Armed Men are Joining Us to Avenge their Relatives: Interview with Abu Risha” (Arabic), *al-Hayat*, March 19, 2007.

6 “American Officials Hold Secret Talks with Tribal Leaders” (Arabic), *al-Hayat*, February 10, 2006; “Killing of [Tribal Head Hikmat] Mumtaz Precipitated Open War on al-Qa`ida” (Arabic), *al-Hayat*, February 18, 2006.

7 “Awakening councils” have formed in al-Azamiyah in Baghdad, Diyala, Samarra, Ninawa, Salah al-Din and southern Baghdad.

### AQI vs. Nationalist Insurgents

In many ways, AQI’s agenda was always in conflict with the nationalist-leaning insurgents represented by groups like the Islamic Army in Iraq and the 1920 Revolution Brigades. While these nationalists use Islam as the vocabulary of resistance to the occupation, they are, generally speaking, not interested

**“The errors of AQI are not incidental; they are hardwired in the genetic code of global jihadists.”**

in establishing an Islamic state or pursuing a global jihad. They want to remove the predominantly Shi`a government that has deprived them of power and privilege. They cooperated with AQI because it was in their interests to sustain attacks on the new Iraqi government and its emerging security forces. Keeping the existing government and the coalition forces preoccupied with extremists takes the military pressure off the nationalist insurgents.

AQI was aware of this marriage of convenience and sought to benefit from it. By 2006, however, AQI began to pose as the leader of the Iraqi jihad, no longer satisfied with the role of an equal partner. AQI had two concerns in mind: one ideological and the other practical. The ideological related to AQI’s ambition to reap the benefits of its struggle by establishing a permanent presence in Iraq and fulfilling its desire to establish “true” Islam even within a small territory. This emirate would be the launching point for future jihads just as the Prophet Muhammad and his companions used their tiny state in Medina to conquer the rest of the Arabian Peninsula and, eventually, expand the Islamic empire from Spain to China. AQI recognized that the history of Islamic activism is replete with episodes in which alliances with non-Islamist forces ended up with the latter marginalizing the jihadists. It does not want to lose the opportunity that was denied to Islamist movements in the past.

As for the practical concern, AQI feared any side deals between nationalist insurgents and the Iraqi government that might sell it out in exchange for a share of political power. To prevent such a possibility, AQI sought to encourage—and later compel—other groups to follow its lead. In January 2006, it declared the formation of the Mujahidin Shura Council,

uniting several insurgent groups, including AQI, into one organization. Later that year, as tensions with the tribes intensified, it declared the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and demanded that all other insurgent groups and Sunni tribes pledge allegiance to its leader, Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi.<sup>8</sup>

Iraq’s nationalists rejected this state on several grounds. First, no one had heard of Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi or had seen his face. There is even speculation that he is a fictional character masking the foreign leadership behind ISI. Second, the Sunni nationalists reject the idea of federalism in Iraq, which would deprive them of oil wealth and, they believe, would be a step toward the break-up of Iraq into three separate states. ISI as a state for Sunnis in western and central Iraq plays directly into the hands of the federalists and paves the way for the Kurds to declare their state in the north and the Shi`a in the south. Third, Iraqi nationalists constitute the majority in the insurgency and they carry out the most attacks. It is they who should be in the lead because they give shelter to AQI and allow it to thrive.

Criticism of the newly formed Islamic state may not have amounted to much had ISI not proceeded with killing several commanders of the insurgent groups that refused to pledge loyalty to Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi. In March 2007, Harith Dhahir Khamis al-Dari, commander of the 1920 Revolution Brigades in the Abu Ghurayb sector, was killed along with three family members by two car bombs near his home. His father, Tahir Khamis al-Dari, blamed the bombings on AQI. Al-Dari previously criticized ISI and claimed that its objective is to break Iraq into separate states.<sup>9</sup> In April 2007, the Islamic Army in Iraq dropped a bombshell when it accused AQI of killing 30 of its members.

Since then, many of the Iraqi nationalists have taken a more or less hostile position to AQI.

8 Video message by unknown representative of the Media Commission of the Mujahidin Shura Council distributed through the al-Tajdeed Forum of the Islamic Renewal Organization ([www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums](http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums)), October 15, 2006; Audio message entitled “I Am Aware of My Lord,” by Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, leader of the ISI, distributed through the World News Network ([www.w-n-n.com](http://www.w-n-n.com)), March 13, 2007.

9 Communiqué by the 1920 Revolution Brigades announcing the “martyrdom” of its leader distributed through the al-Firdaws online forums ([www.alfirdaws.org/vb](http://www.alfirdaws.org/vb)), March 28, 2007; Karin Brulliard, “Dozens Die In 2 Truck Bombings in the North,” *Washington Post*, March 28, 2007.



Some have openly cooperated with the United States and formed Sunni militias to clear neighborhoods and cities of AQI fighters.<sup>10</sup> The war against the tribes, conflict with the nationalist insurgents and the surge of U.S. forces has driven AQI northward toward Mosul—and it is not clear if it will survive there either.

#### Exploiting the Errors of their Ways

In a recent audiotape recording entitled “A Message to Our People in Iraq,” Usama bin Ladin urged all the insurgents and tribes to reconcile their differences, and he acknowledged that “errors” had been made.<sup>11</sup> He advised followers to avoid “fanatical loyalty to men” and reminded them that what unites Muslims is their adherence to Islam, not their “belonging to a tribe, homeland, or organization.”

The errors of AQI are not incidental; they are hardwired in the genetic code of global jihadists. This type of movement attracts

### “What is happening in Iraq might be replicable elsewhere.”

millicants from around the world by inspiring them with a virulent ideology that demonizes enemies, venerates self-sacrifice and conjures up illusions of a utopian world.

Such a movement finds it exceedingly difficult to balance pragmatic considerations with the fanatical doctrine that brings it to the land of jihad in the first place. The focus on jihad and martyrdom carries with it an impatience for gradual political and social work necessary to build up a mass base that can sustain a movement over time. As a result, global jihadists rely on coercive extraction to meet the needs of their jihad; therefore, they become a heavy burden on their host communities.

The extreme jihadists make too many enemies, kill more Muslims than they kill alleged enemies of Islam and coerce local populations into complying with their interpretation of orthodoxy. They emphasize an all-or-nothing politics that conflicts with the needs of building effective coalitions.

Their outrageous tactics may inspire fear, but not admiration. When communities have an opportunity to turn their back on these extremists without fear of reprisals, they seize it.

Yet, despite these vulnerabilities, AQI could still survive in Iraq if:

- Sectarian killings against Sunnis by Shi'a militias and government death squads re-escalate in the near future.
- Sunni insurgents see the United States as abandoning their goal of pressing the current government to compromise on including Sunnis in the security forces and fostering an inclusive political process.
- Coalition forces begin to dismantle Sunni militias and awakening councils out of fear that they will attack the central government in the future. Such a move must be preceded by national reconciliation that guarantees the security and reintegration of Sunnis in the Iraqi polity.

What is happening in Iraq might be replicable elsewhere. U.S. strategists have to recognize the enduring vulnerabilities of global jihadism, exploit the rifts between nationalists, tribes and global jihadists, magnify the mistakes of the extremists toward their own host societies, and avoid making political and military blunders that rescue the extremists from their own.

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## Al-Qa`ida's Resurgence in Pakistan

By Bruce Riedel

AL-QA`IDA HAS MADE a spectacular resurrection in Pakistan during the last five years. In 2002, the terrorist group had been driven from its base in Afghanistan, their Taliban ally was discredited and defeated and their key operatives were being hunted down and arrested. Today, however, al-Qa`ida has a secure operating base in the country, its leadership is issuing constant guidance to its global supporters, it is threatening NATO's position in Afghanistan through its Taliban allies and it is now a growing force in Pakistan itself. The current political crisis in Pakistan is endangering the secular democratic forces in the country, polarizing the debate about the country's future and strengthening al-Qa`ida's Islamist partners. Al-Qa`ida's room to operate in the country is expanding, not contracting.

The conventional wisdom is that al-Qa`ida leaders Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri are operating in the border lands along the Afghan border in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA); however, there are many more areas of the country that are now increasingly out of the control of the central government and are essentially lawless. From Balochistan to Kashmir, much of western Pakistan is sympathetic to al-Qa`ida's message and remains an open field where they can operate. Even in the urban areas, al-Qa`ida operatives have been able to attack key targets, including military posts, with increasingly deadly results.<sup>1</sup>

Most concerning is that the resurgence of the al-Qa`ida-Taliban alliance in Pakistan has created a safe operating base for the global jihadist movement to train and recruit operatives from Western Europe (especially from the United Kingdom) to strike in London and other major European cities. There is little doubt that they are also hoping to strike American targets.

#### Factors Behind al-Qa`ida's Ability to Regroup

Before September 11, 2001, Pakistan and al-Qa`ida were in practice de facto allies. Both supported the Taliban and Kashmiri terrorist groups in a complex nexus of terror with

<sup>10</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “The Former-Insurgent Counterinsurgency,” *New York Times*, September 2, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> The audiotape was released on the Ana al-Muslim website ([www.muslim.net](http://www.muslim.net)) by al-Sahab Media Production, October 23, 2007.

<sup>1</sup> As long ago as July 1, 2005, Ahmed Rashid pointed out that Bin Ladin could be anywhere from the Karakoram Mountains near China to the Balochi desert among Kashmiris, Pashtuns and Balochs angry with Musharraf.

which the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was intimately familiar but did not fully control. After General Pervez Musharraf took power in a coup in October 1999, he promised to crack down on al-Qa`ida, but in actuality he did little. To the contrary, in December 1999 Kashmiri terrorists working closely with the Taliban, ISI and al-Qa`ida hijacked an Indian airliner to Kandahar to free prisoners in India in an operation that underscored the intimate connections between Pakistan and the terrorist network inside Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Qa`ida and the Taliban were stunned by the speed of the collapse of their forces in late 2001 when the U.S.-led coalition moved into Afghanistan. They had expected the Northern Alliance to disintegrate after assassinating its leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud, and thought that Pakistan would stand by its Taliban protégé. Instead, by the end of the year Pakistan had withdrawn its logistical support and pulled out the thousands of advisers and experts that kept the Taliban war machine running. Bin Ladin, Zawahiri and their followers fled into Pakistan. An American-Afghan hammer was poised to crush them against a Pakistani anvil.

In what amounted to a costly diversion, however, the United States concentrated its operations on Iraq, and key Special Forces units and CIA operatives were taken off the Afghan battlefield and were prepared for engagement in the Middle East. The new Afghan government was left with only the leanest of forces to pursue its enemies and stabilize the country. Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, Mahmud Durrani, has noted that "we had almost licked al-Qa`ida after 9/11 because of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan...But what happened? The focus shifted to Iraq big time. This was a rebirth of al-Qa`ida."<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the situation in Pakistan changed. On December 13, 2001, five Kashmiri terrorists from groups long associated with Bin Ladin attacked the Indian parliament in New Delhi. India blamed Pakistan for harboring the terrorist leadership that ordered the attack, which followed dozens of others. India mobilized along the border, causing Pakistan to mobilize in turn; this development meant

that Pakistani troops that were needed in the west were turned to the east. For the next year, almost one million soldiers faced each other in a nervous showdown.

It is not clear if diverting forces from the hunt for Bin Ladin was one of the intentions of the planners of the attack on the Indian parliament, nor is it clear who was the real mastermind behind the attack—the Kashmiris on their own, the ISI which had created them, Musharraf and the generals, or al-Qa`ida. Yet, the impact was critical. At its moment of greatest peril, al-Qa`ida was free to recover due to U.S. and Pakistani resources diverted away from the hunt. Some important al-Qa`ida figures—Musharraf claims more than 600<sup>4</sup>—were apprehended in Pakistan, including Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and Abu Zubayda, yet the top leadership eluded capture.

These leaders lurked behind the resurgence of the Taliban, which came roaring back. Operating with at least the tacit acquiescence of the ISI, the Taliban quickly recovered and rebuilt. By 2005, it was again in control of much of southern Afghanistan at night. Taliban leaders have consistently said that Bin Ladin has assisted them with their military recovery and, indeed, the Taliban rapidly adopted al-Qa`ida-style tactics. Martyrdom operations were not typical in Afghanistan; in 2002, there were only two in the whole country. Today, however, a suicide attack occurs approximately every three days.<sup>5</sup> NATO casualties are up sharply, and more Americans have died in Afghanistan this year than any previous one.

In addition to helping the Taliban recover, al-Qa`ida in Pakistan also began reaching out to Pakistani diaspora communities around the world to provide an effective means to recruit, indoctrinate and train operatives to strike in Europe and ultimately in the United States. The 800,000-strong Pakistani communities in the United Kingdom (1.3% of the UK's population, 500,000 of whom are Kashmiris) are the favorite targets, but communities in Germany, Denmark, Austria, Italy and elsewhere have also been infiltrated. Every major terrorist operation in the United Kingdom since 9/11, including the July 7, 2005 underground attacks and the foiled 2006 plot to blow up 10 jumbo jets en route

to the United States, have had a Pakistani connection back to al-Qa`ida. The head of Britain's domestic security service, the MI5, recently noted that "the command, control and inspiration for attack planning in the UK (for the last five years) have derived from the al-Qa`ida leadership in Pakistan."<sup>6</sup>

Within Pakistan, al-Qa`ida has become an increasingly powerful force. It has tried to assassinate Musharraf several times and is stepping up efforts to remove him from power. In September, after the Pakistani army stormed the Islamist Red Mosque in Islamabad, Bin Ladin and Zawahiri each issued statements calling for his ouster. Bin Ladin said that "it is obligatory for Muslims in Pakistan to carry out jihad to remove Pervez, his government, his army and all those who help him."<sup>7</sup>

Yet, Musharraf is not al-Qa`ida's only target in Pakistan. It seeks to destroy the secular political leadership and civil society that offers an alternative to its extremist Salafist Islamic preaching. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has been a target of al-Qa`ida for more than a decade as she notes in her memoirs, and al-Qa`ida may have been responsible for her assassination attempt when she returned to Pakistan this fall.<sup>8</sup>

Al-Qa`ida's goal in Pakistan is to polarize the country into warring factions, break the back of civil and secular society and ultimately see its allies in the Pakistani Islamist movement seize power. It wants a broken state, a broken army and broken political parties. From the ashes it dreams of an Islamic emirate emerging, which could unite with the Taliban in Afghanistan, free Kashmir and be the center of a revived caliphate.

This dream, however, is still far from al-Qa`ida's reach. Pakistan's political meltdown has not progressed far enough for the extreme Islamic groups—such as the Taliban, al-Qa`ida, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and others—to take power. Yet, the trends are in their direction and time seems to be on their side as long as the democratic center in Pakistan is suppressed by a military dictatorship. The best antidote to al-Qa`ida in Pakistan would be a legitimately elected government that could pursue the war against al-Qa`ida with the

2 Jaswant Singh, *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2007), p. 238.

3 Durrani interview in "Pakistan: Fall Guy or Failure," *The Washington Diplomat* 14:11 (2007); See also the account by Gary Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine, 2005).

4 Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

5 Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "Losing Afghanistan, One Civilian at a Time," *Washington Post*, November 18, 2007.

6 Jonathan Evans, "Intelligence, Counter Terrorism and Trust," November 5, 2007, available at [www.mi5.gov.uk](http://www.mi5.gov.uk).

7 "Bin Laden Wants Musharraf Removed," al-Jazeera, September 20, 2007.

8 Benazir Bhutto, *Daughter of the East: An Autobiography* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2007).

backing of the Pakistani people.

Instead, polls today show that Bin Laden is more popular than Musharraf among Pakistanis and that the United States has an all time low popularity rating.<sup>9</sup> Rather than being a bulwark against al-Qa`ida, Musharraf's regime has become a recruiting cry for it. By backing Musharraf, the United States may be losing the battle for the hearts and minds of 170 million Pakistanis.

For its part, the Pakistani military is extremely suspicious of the United States and believes it has been betrayed by Washington many times in the past. It is unlikely to cooperate seriously with American programs designed to increase the U.S. military presence on the ground in FATA, or to "secure" Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. As tensions inevitably mount between the U.S. Congress and Musharraf over his continued rule, pressure will build to constrain further military ties, and suspicions will grow within the army about American reliability.

### Conclusion

It is disturbing enough that Pakistan is the real front line in the war against al-Qa`ida. The most frightening concern, however, is al-Qa`ida's pursuit of a nuclear weapon. Pakistan is the world's only Muslim state with nuclear weapons. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Pakistan has an estimated 50-90 nuclear weapons.<sup>10</sup> The former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, George Tenet, in his memoirs laid out in great detail al-Qa`ida's efforts during the last decade to get its hands on a Pakistani nuclear device.<sup>11</sup> If Pakistan becomes more destabilized, it is likely that al-Qa`ida will make every effort to get one.

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## The Saudi Process of Repatriating and Reintegrating Guantanamo Returnees

By Christopher Boucek

THE PLIGHT OF Saudi nationals interned at Guantanamo Bay has been a major domestic issue in Saudi Arabia since the detention facility first opened in January 2002. For nearly six years, the Saudi government has sought to secure the repatriation of its nationals. From the outset, Saudi authorities have maintained that when the Saudi nationals detained at Guantanamo do return to the kingdom, that they "will be subject to Saudi laws and justice."<sup>1</sup> This article will outline the repatriation procedure for Saudi returnees from Guantanamo and detail their reintegration process. These programs are part of a much larger Saudi security and counter-terrorism strategy designed to undermine the support for terrorism in the kingdom through the rehabilitation and demobilization of its supporters and activists. Unique in their size, scope and content, Saudi Arabia's rehabilitation programs are generating positive results that demonstrate alternative ways of dealing with the many dilemmas posed by indefinite incarceration.

There have been a number of releases and repatriations of Saudi nationals from Guantanamo. About 117 of the 139 Saudis held at Guantanamo have been returned to their home country. Detainees are usually released in groups from Guantanamo and the Saudi government then brings them back to the kingdom. This is all part of a carefully choreographed reintegration procedure designed to facilitate dialogue and reinforce the message that the Saudi government is striving to help individuals corrupted by extremist beliefs return to proper Islam.

The first repatriation occurred in May 2003, and the most recent took place in November

2007. It is expected that more Saudis will eventually be released; however, it appears extremely likely that U.S. authorities will refuse to release every Saudi national detained at Guantanamo. Nonetheless, it is the Saudi government's position to work for the release of all its nationals held as enemy combatants.

As early as January 2002, Saudi Arabia began to publicly press for the repatriation of Saudi nationals detained at Guantanamo Bay.<sup>2</sup> According to reports published at the time, Prince Nayef, the minister of interior, stated that 100 of the 158 detainees in Guantanamo were Saudi, and that 240 Saudis were apprehended by joint U.S.-Pakistani teams on the Afghan border.<sup>3</sup> The number of Saudi prisoners at Guantanamo rose to 125 by the summer of 2002.<sup>4</sup> The Saudis offered to interrogate and try them in Saudi Arabia and also offered to assist in the interrogation of suspected al-Qa`ida operatives in American detention at the U.S. base in Cuba.<sup>5</sup> In February 2002, Prince Nayef stated that he wanted to see all the Saudis in Guantanamo returned to the kingdom after the investigations were concluded.<sup>6</sup>

In June 2002, a Saudi team of experts drawn from the Interior and Foreign Ministries made the first publicly acknowledged visit to Saudi nationals interned at Guantanamo.<sup>7</sup> According to published reports, no Saudi officials had been allowed to meet with any of the Guantanamo detainees prior to this. According to press reports from the time, Deputy Interior Minister Prince Ahmed bin Abdel Aziz was forced to meet with representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross to learn about the status of Saudi prisoners.<sup>8</sup>

By August 2002 it was revealed that the Saudi government was in negotiations for the return of Saudi nationals detained at Guantanamo.<sup>9</sup> While negotiations were acknowledged to have started, it was also acknowledged that they would need much more time. In May 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that the United States and Saudi Arabia had reached an agreement to repatriate

9 "Poll: Bin Laden Tops Musharraf in Pakistan," CNN, September 11, 2007.

10 The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Nuclear Black Markets: Pakistan, AQ Khan and the Rise of Proliferation Networks* (London: Hastings Print, 2007).

11 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

2 *Al-Watan*, January 28, 2002; *Arab News*, January 29, 2002.

3 Ibid.

4 *Okaz*, August 26, 2002; *Arab News*, August 31, 2002.

5 *Arab News*, February 11, 2002.

6 *Okaz*, February 27, 2002.

7 *Al-Watan*, June 29, 2002; *Arab News*, June 30, 2002.

8 *Arab News*, June 30, 2002; *Okaz*, June 13, 2002.

9 *Arab News*, August 27, 2002; *Okaz*, August 26, 2002.



Saudi nationals interned at Guantanamo.<sup>10</sup> During that month, the first Saudis were released.

### Repatriation

Strict secrecy surrounds the return of each group of detainees and there is no advance announcement of when a group will return to the kingdom. An official plane is dispatched with representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the ministry's Advisory Committee, including medical doctors and other assorted medical personnel, psychologists, psychiatrists and security officers. The plane departs from Riyadh in the early morning before dawn, and makes only one stop en route for several hours in Morocco. In Cuba, the Saudis meet with the Americans to receive the Saudis that are to be repatriated. When the Saudis take custody of their nationals, they request that they be un-handcuffed before boarding. This is important as it sets the stage for all subsequent interactions with the returnees. Saudi medical personnel collect medical records and, if needed, supplies of any medications that they may be taking. After this short transfer process, the Saudi plane then departs for the return flight to Riyadh.

According to personnel involved in the flights, returnees are often silent and expressionless at first, unsure at what is happening to them. After years of internment, it takes some time for the reality that they are on their way back home to fully process. Doctors tend to the returnees, performing routine exams and diagnostic tests onboard the aircraft.<sup>11</sup> After completing the medical screening, psychological evaluations begin. The questioning, interrogation and counseling process also begin on the flight back from Guantanamo. The entire process lasts about 38 hours, with the plane touching down in Riyadh in the early morning darkness.

A number of dignitaries often greet their arrival, including members of the royal family. The plane is met at the airport by more officials from the Advisory Committee and the ministry's rehabilitation program. Shaykh Ahmed Hamid Jelani, director of the Care Rehabilitation Center, boards the plane and personally welcomes all of the returnees back to their country.<sup>12</sup> From the airport,

returnees are transferred to jail, usually to al-Ha'ir prison outside Riyadh.

### Reunions

Once they have arrived, the Ministry of Interior formally contacts the families of returnees and informs them that their loved ones have returned. Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs Prince Mohammed bin Nayef personally contacts families, and others are notified directly by provincial governors. The ministry then brings the families to Riyadh where they are checked into one hotel at the government's expense. After the families have been notified, the ministry releases the names of all the Saudis that have returned to the kingdom and provides a telephone number to the media for friends and extended family to contact. No announcements are made before their arrival in order to reduce media sensationalism, keep the focus on family reunifications and also because it can never be known with certainty who the U.S. military will release.

For the first week the returnees just visit with their families. The ministry brings families out to al-Ha'ir prison and coordinates the visits for all the detainees. Meanwhile, counselors and shaykhs from the Advisory Committee are also at the hotel to speak with returnees' families. This is done not only to provide counseling services for the emotionally exhausting experience that they are undergoing, but also to start the process of interacting with the returnees' families and larger social network. The involvement of an individual's family and larger social network is a critical aspect of all Saudi rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and it is essential to the program's success. Engaging the families of returnees has been a priority from the outset. One of the earliest moves was the creation of a special liaison office in the ministry to work exclusively with the families of Guantanamo detainees to facilitate information sharing about family kin and the delivery of letters.<sup>13</sup>

After being reunited with their own families, the returnees meet with the families of other Saudi nationals still held at Guantanamo. This is important for a number of reasons, most of all to impress upon the returnees that should they run afoul of the authorities, their comrades who they left at Guantanamo will not return. It is therefore critical that they not fall in with the wrong crowd. This aspect of collective responsibility is a common thread in Saudi rehabilitation and after-care programs,

and one that generates positive results in large part due to traditional Saudi cultural factors. In fact, often when Guantanamo returnees are furloughed for religious observances or family celebrations such as weddings, the family members of those still remaining at Guantanamo provide such strict surveillance that security personnel often can step back and observe from a distance.<sup>14</sup>

### Reintegration

After going through questioning, returnees are brought into the Saudi judicial system. They are usually charged from among several offenses, most frequently leaving the kingdom without permission and carrying a weapon. Their cases

**“A vital part of this process is that the returnee has incriminated his actions, and recognized his guilt.”**

are tried before a special court arranged by the Justice Ministry. It is important to note that this is not a “special court” similar to a security court as in other Arab countries, but simply a special arrangement to handle the cases of Guantanamo returnees whose cases are too sensitive to appear in the regular court system. The returnees are not transferred to the court like other defendants, and the judge visits them in this special arrangement.

After typically being found guilty of these charges,<sup>15</sup> returnees are usually sentenced for up to two years. While serving their sentence, Guantanamo returnees go through the Counseling Program, the Ministry of Interior's rehabilitation program designed to counter *takfiri* (excommunication) extremism through a combination of intensive religious study and dialogue and psychological counseling.<sup>16</sup> After serving between six months to one year in custody, it is not uncommon for a returnee to receive a royal pardon, at which point they are transferred to the Ministry of Interior's rehabilitation care facility. It is understood that this occurs after sufficient progress has been made in the counseling process and the Advisory Committee has made

<sup>10</sup> *Okaz*, May 25, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Personal interview, Dr. Abdel Aziz al-Ghamdi, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Personal interviews, Shaykh Ahmed Hamid Jelani and Care Rehabilitation Center staff, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007.

<sup>13</sup> *Arab News*, January 13, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Personal interview, HRH Prince Muhammed bin Nayef, assistant minister of interior for security affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October 2007.

<sup>15</sup> This is not always the case.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Boucek, “Extremist Reeducation and Rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia,” *Terrorism Monitor* 5:16 (2007).



a recommendation that the returnee has adequately proven himself to be ready to move to the next stage in the rehabilitation process. A vital part of this process is that the returnee has incriminated his actions, and recognized his guilt.<sup>17</sup>

At this point, returnees are transferred from confined custody in a correctional facility to a residential rehabilitation center. The environment at the Care Rehabilitation Center is in marked contrast to that inside prison.<sup>18</sup> While residents at the rehabilitation center are still confined to the center, there is much greater latitude in activities and living style.<sup>19</sup> Dorms replace cells, and there are numerous activities, including sports and other recreational pastimes.

Most importantly, every resident at the center knows exactly how long he will be there, and this contributes to the atmosphere of non-confrontation. At the rehabilitation center, returnees spend time with the doctors and shaykhs from the Advisory Committee who will evaluate the progress and make recommendations for each detainee's release. Through classes, therapy, dialogue, discussion and interaction, the staff of the rehabilitation center seek to add in good behavior after bad behavior has been removed in prison.<sup>20</sup> While at the rehabilitation center, returnees are permitted to leave for short periods when in the custody of their family, and their families can visit them at the center. Through these activities, trust is built, and slowly they are reintegrated into society.<sup>21</sup>

Upon release, the government has helped returnees secure employment and housing, has paid for wedding dowries and automobiles, and even provides additional stipends. Much has been made in the Western press of the financial incentives offered to returnees; however, this focus is disproportionate to the vast amount of work that goes unseen by the program workers. While the financial support should not be discounted since it is a crucial part of the Saudi strategy, it needs to be put into proper perspective alongside the

intangible factors offered by the program. It is here where the Saudi effort has made remarkable progress in only several years.

To date, none of the released Saudi Guantanamo returnees have reoffended.<sup>22</sup> The results generated by the Saudi reintegration program have led to considerable interest in exploring alternatives to traditional "hard" security measures. Admittedly, the Saudi program utilizes many unique cultural features, many of which are distinctive to the kingdom.

What the Saudi program demonstrates, however, is that there is a solution to the massive populations in security prisons, and with a reported 25,000 prisoners in U.S. custody in Iraq alone, it is clear why the American military has expressed an interest. As such, the Saudi reintegration programs not only warrant further detailed study, but examination of how they can be applied elsewhere.

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## Leading Egyptian Jihadist Sayyid Imam Renounces Violence

By Jarret Brachman

IN NOVEMBER 2007, Sayyid Imam `Abd al-`Aziz Imam al-Sharif, the former mufti of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and mentor to Ayman al-Zawahiri, released his much anticipated book, *Tarshid al-Jihad fi Misr wa al-Aalam (Rationalizations on Jihad in Egypt and the World)*. Published in serialized format by the Egyptian daily *al-Masry al-Youm*, the book is already being hailed within official Egyptian circles as the definitive renunciation of violence by one of the most influential jihadist thinkers alive today.

Sayyid Imam, better known by his *nom de plume* Abd al-Qadir ibn Abd al-Aziz or his moniker Dr. Fadl, is a living legend within

the global jihadist movement.<sup>1</sup> Two of his books, *Risalat al-Umdah Fi Idad al-Uddah (Foundations in Preparing for Jihad)* and *al-Jami fi Talab al-Ilm al-Sharif (The Comprehensive Book about the Pursuit of Glorious Knowledge)* are core jihadist texts: over the past decade, they have been found in the hands of terrorist cells worldwide. Sharif's other writings, such as *The Five Ground Rules for the Achievement of the Tradition of Victory or its Absence*, *The Manhaj of Ahl As-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah* and *The Refutation of the Doubts Concerning Bay'ah and Imarah* are actively shared in their original Arabic and in English translation online.<sup>2</sup>

### Countering Jihadist Ideology

Sayyid Imam's current book is an attempt to counter those earlier works by way of a *fiqh*-based (legal) series of clarifications and reconsiderations. The jihadist use of violence in trying to overthrow Islamic governments is both counter-productive and religiously unlawful, Sayyid Imam now argues. *Da`wa*, or the practice of publicly calling others to Islam, is a much safer, effective and religiously justifiable way to channel one's grievances against a regime. Sayyid Imam prompts Muslims to try non-violent attempts to reform (*al-islah*) laws that are not in accordance with Shari`a. He advises that Muslims flee state persecution (*al-hijra*) when necessary instead of fighting, or isolate (*al-`uzla*) themselves from corruption that cannot be escaped. Muslims should pardon (*al-`afw*) the harmful actions of others, forgive (*al-safh*) one's enemies, shun (*al-i`rad*) those who advocate un-Islamic behavior and maintain patience (*al-aabr*) in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

According to Sayyid Imam, in judging whether or not to employ violence, particularly against an Islamic government or foreign tourists, one must always consider whether the potential damage of such an act outweighs the potential benefits that could be gained. Since violence only leads to death, destruction and further violence, Sayyid Imam concludes that it can never be justified within Islamic law and must, therefore, never be applied on religious grounds. On practical grounds, he suggests, armed action against an entrenched power does not make historical sense; after decades of violence in Egypt, for instance, jihadists have yet to overthrow the ruling regime. Sayyid Imam's approach, therefore,

17 Personal interview, HRH Prince Muhammed bin Nayef, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October 2007.

18 Based on site visits to al-Ha'ir prison and the Care Rehabilitation Center, November 2007.

19 For a good overview of the rehabilitation center, see the online *Time* magazine photo essay at [www.time.com](http://www.time.com).

20 Personal interview, Dr. Turki al-Atyan, psychologist, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007.

21 Personal interview, Dr. Abdulrahman al-Hadlaq, adviser to HRH assistant minister of interior for security affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2007.

22 Personal interviews, Ministry of Interior officials, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October and November 2007.

1 *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), available at [www.ctc.usma.edu/atlas/atlas.asp](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/atlas/atlas.asp).

2 A comprehensive collection of Sayyid Imam's early books can be found in Arabic at [www.tawhed.ws](http://www.tawhed.ws).

is to maintain his ideological commitment to applying Shari'a on Earth, but to reject the use of violence against governments who fail to apply it. He can, therefore, maintain his Salafist credentials while also appeasing his Egyptian overseers.

Sayyid Imam's *Rationalizations* is one in a series of recantations emerging out of the Egyptian government's initiative to quash radicalism within its borders. The historic leadership of Egypt's other major terrorist organization, al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Group), led the charge in 1997 by announcing a formal cease-fire, which they followed in 2003 with a renunciation of violence altogether in the form of two books: *al-Riyadh Bombing: Rulings and Repercussions* and *River of Memories*.<sup>3</sup> As reward for their moves toward reconciliation, Egyptian authorities released more than 900 imprisoned members of al-Gama'a.

One of EIJ's first retractions came in March 2000 from the Egyptian Islamist now living as a political refugee in Germany, Osama Ayyub. Ayyub's attempt to reform Islamic Jihad's ideology generated only limited support, most notably from Shaykh Ahmad Yusuf, the amir of the Bani Suwayf group, and Shaykh Nabil al-Mughrabi, who was serving two life sentences in Egyptian prison.<sup>4</sup>

During the summer of 2004, two more senior EIJ figures, Nabil Na'im, a senior leader of Islamic Jihad in Egypt since Ayman al-Zawahiri left him in charge in the mid-1980s, and his colleague Ismail Nasr, drew up a "draft document" entitled *Visualization*, in which they rejected violent attempts to overthrow Islamic governments and urged the al-Azhar University scholars to publicly readdress the issue. Like Ayyub, Na'im and Nasr could only generate limited support from within the imprisoned Islamic Jihad ranks: Shaykh Ahmad Yusuf Hamdallah, Dr. Ahmad Ujayzah and Shaykh Amal 'Abd al-Wahhab were the only major figures to support the move. The competing al-Marj group, led by Majdi Salim and the Abu Za'bal group, led by Ahmad Salamah Mabruk, rejected Na'im's initiative on grounds that he lacked the religious qualifications to authorize such a revision. Sayyid Imam, however, changed the picture.<sup>5</sup>

By 2006, Sayyid Imam had been extradited to Egypt by the Yemenis, and with the support of the Egyptian government he began lecturing with his longtime colleague, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Jamal, to imprisoned members of various jihadist groups in the al-Fayyum Prison on the legal limitations of armed action. As the highest-ranking Islamic scholar in Egyptian prison, Sayyid Imam commanded the respect across jihadist subsets that neither Ayyub nor Na'im could. Sayyid Imam's book has also caused a stir among his former colleagues who have since launched their own coordinated response.

### Jihadists Respond

After submitting *Rationalizations* to the al-Azhar scholars for their review, Sayyid Imam faxed a statement to *al-Sharq al-Awsat* announcing the impending release of his retractions. Ayman al-Zawahiri took the first shot in his July 5, 2007 video, observing,

I read a ridiculous bit of humor in *al-Sharq al-Awsat* newspaper, which claimed that it received a communiqué from one of the backtrackers, who faxed it from prison...I laughed inside and asked myself, "Do the prison cells of Egypt now have fax machines? And I wonder, are these fax machines connected to the same line as the electric shock machines, or do they have a separate line?"<sup>6</sup>

Al-Qa'ida's ideological hitman, Abu Yahya al-Libi, followed Zawahiri's comments in a speech where, rather than interpreting Sayyid Imam's abandonment of jihadist principles as an ideological defeat for the jihadist movement, he characterized it as just another weapon being wielded in the Crusader's "war of ideas."<sup>7</sup> Muslims, he suggested, should dismiss the news as a result of torture, brainwashing and blackmail.

Muhammad Khalil al-Hakaymah, the former al-Gama'a member who has since pledged allegiance to al-Qa'ida's senior leadership, followed Zawahiri and Abu Yahya with a six-point response to Sayyid Imam's book.<sup>8</sup>

Jihad Joins Initiative for Halting Violence in Egypt," *al-Hayab*, March 22, 2007.

6 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Advice of One Concerned," July 5, 2007.

7 Abu Yahya al-Libi, 93-minute video release, September 10, 2007.

8 Muhammad Khalil al-Hakaymah, "Statement About What Has Been Published of the Document Entitled 'Rationalization of Jihad Operations,'" al-Fajr Media Center, November 26, 2007.

In it, he said that Sayyid Imam tarnished his religious credentials the moment he broke from Zawahiri in 1993. He accused Sayyid Imam of misrepresenting the reality of jihadist armed action in his book and implied that Sayyid Imam was little more than an armchair ideologue even when he was aligned with the movement. Now in prison, Sayyid Imam has shown just how weak he is to Egyptian government pressure, al-Hakaymah chided, particularly when compared to the dedication of another imprisoned Egyptian jihadist ideologue, Shaykh 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman.

### Conclusion

Sayyid Imam's book will continue to cause al-Qa'ida headaches, particularly because it condemns men like Zawahiri not simply on strategic grounds but on religious and legal grounds, something few hard line scholars have been able to do with any real credence to date. Sayyid Imam traces Zawahiri's record of Shari'a violations back to November 1993 when the Vanguard of Conquest terrorist group, an offshoot of EIJ with which he and Zawahiri were both intimately involved, tried to assassinate Egyptian Prime Minister 'Atif Siddiqi.

When the bomb exploded, the prime minister escaped with minor wounds. A 12-year-old girl named Shayma, however, was inadvertently killed by flying shrapnel from the car bomb, which the Egyptian government seized as an opportunity to turn public sentiment against Zawahiri, Sayyid Imam and the EIJ.<sup>9</sup> Nearly 1,000 members and supporters of the group were subsequently arrested and the group plummeted in popularity.

It is possible that Sayyid Imam will be able to harness this newfound attention and use it to create a self-sustaining counter-jihadist movement. According to Nu'man bin 'Uthman, the former leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), Sayyid Imam's revisions could turn out to be a major ideological defeat for the global jihadist movement because it offers real "preventive therapy" to at-risk youth.<sup>10</sup> For 'Uthman, *Rationalizations* demonstrates a compelling middle way for Egyptian Muslims between being a religious lackey and a jihadist terrorist. By rejecting the doctrine of *takfir* (excommunication) and the jihadists' reliance on violence to deal with political grievances,

9 See Ayman al-Zawahiri's discussion of this incident in *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet*, which was serialized in *al-Sharq al-Awsat* in December 2001.

10 Nu'man bin 'Uthman, "Egyptian al-Jihad Dominates al-Qa'ida," *Djazair News*, November 17, 2007.

3 Jailan Halawi, *al-Abram Weekly*, October 9-15, 2003.

4 Muhammad Shafey, *Asbarq Alawsat*, December 6, 2007.

5 Camille al-Tawil, "The Two Leaders, Dr. Fadl And Abd-al-Aziz al-Jamal, Appear For First Time Since They Were Handed Over By Yemen 2002 Former Amir of

Sayyid Imam seems to believe that he can spark a reformation within Salafist thinking both in Egypt and across the Islamic world. As long as the Egyptian government keeps its distance from Sayyid Imam's efforts, it just might work.

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## Securing Yemen's Cooperation in the Second Phase of the War on al-Qa`ida

By Gregory Johnsen

IN EARLY NOVEMBER, Yemen concluded an eight-month trial of 36 suspected al-Qa`ida militants. The trial, which was plagued by lengthy delays and allegations of torture, was the first legal action to address the country's resurgent al-Qa`ida threat.<sup>1</sup> At the center of the trial was the role of the accused in two operations that marked the emergence of the second generation of al-Qa`ida in Yemen militants in 2006. The first was the February 2006 prison break of 23 al-Qa`ida militants from a Political Security Prison in Sana`a, which provided a core group of experienced leaders around whom Yemen's young and largely directionless jihadists could rally. The second operation, which demonstrated the new generation's tactical goals, was the failure of coordinated suicide attacks on oil and gas facilities in Hadramawt and Mar`ib in

September 2006.

The delay in prosecuting these suspects, many of whom have been in custody since early 2007, is indicative of Yemen's approach to the second phase of the war on al-Qa`ida. In the first phase, which lasted from October 2000 to November 2003, Yemen achieved success in utilizing U.S. support to dismantle the leadership of al-Qa`ida in Yemen. `Ali Qa'id al-Harithi, the then head of al-Qa`ida in Yemen, was eliminated through a targeted assassination carried out by a CIA drone in November 2002. His replacement, Muhammad Hamdi al-Ahdal, was also removed from the scene in November 2003 when he was arrested at a wedding in Sana`a. Following a series of attacks in the al-Qadisiyah district of Sana`a in 2002, Yemen carried out a number of security sweeps and arrested a significant amount of al-Qa`ida operatives.

### Government Focuses Less on al-Qa`ida

Since then, however, al-Qa`ida has become much less of a priority for the Yemeni government. Part of this is a result of the success Yemen enjoyed during the first phase; with al-Qa`ida in Yemen largely destroyed or its operatives in jail, there seemed little urgency in continuing to fight an enemy that could not strike back. Those Yemenis that were still free and eager to continue the fight were drawn more to the war in Iraq against U.S. and coalition forces than they were to a leaderless jihad at home. Yemen also began to divert its limited resources, which had been devoted to keeping al-Qa`ida in check, to other more pressing issues such as a revolt in the northern highlands, growing public unrest over inflation and unemployment as well as rising regional tensions along pre-unification lines. All of these issues have increasingly occupied the government's attention since 2004 and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, as Yemen has been forced to deal with a number of different threats to its government, it has also been faced with a decline in oil production. This has corresponded to a similar fall off in oil revenue, upon which Yemen is almost completely dependent. The government has long used oil revenue to co-opt enemies and potential enemies. Significant declines in oil revenue make the traditional approach to governing Yemen untenable.

Already the government has been forced to withdraw pensions from former southern

officers who were pushed into retirement in the aftermath of the 1994 Civil War.<sup>3</sup> This move has sparked protests and demonstrations, some of which have turned violent across the south. Similarly, the government has also been making cuts in subsidies on oil, gas and diesel, which has affected the price of all commodities, while at the same time government salaries have failed to keep pace with inflation.<sup>4</sup> This has provoked demonstrations and protests attacking the government for poor management. As these protests become more widespread during the coming years and as the government continues to lose money due to falling oil production, there is a danger that these different movements will coalesce into a single strand of anti-regime hostility.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, in the future Yemen will be less able to combat al-Qa`ida than in the past. As the government continues to grow weaker and has less money to distribute, it will find that its tradition of financial persuasion and playing different groups off against one another will no longer be feasible. The government will increasingly lack the resources—both military and financial—to compel different tribes to act in accordance with policy determined in Sana`a. Out of necessity, it will also seek to avoid direct confrontations with its enemies as it attempts to ensure its own survival. Instead, it will be forced to pursue its policy of persuasion through other channels. Yemen has already given the United States an example of how this will work with regard to al-Qa`ida in the case of Jamal al-Badawi.

### The Case of Jamal al-Badawi

In mid-October, Yemen announced that Jamal al-Badawi, one of the masterminds of the USS *Cole* attack, had surrendered to Yemeni authorities after months of negotiation between the government and tribal intermediaries. Within weeks, media reports out of Yemen were stating that al-Badawi was free and receiving visitors at his home in Aden. The United States reacted immediately to the reports by postponing payment of more than \$20 million in aid that was to be paid to Yemen through its Millennium Challenge Account.<sup>6</sup> Threatened with a reduction in aid on which it

1 For more information on the trial, see Brian O'Neill, "New Generation of al-Qaeda on Trial in Yemen," *Terrorism Focus* 4:39 (2007).

2 Gregory D. Johnsen, "Well Gone Dry: A Letter from San'a," *The American Interest* 2:2 (2006): pp. 131-139.

3 Ahmad al-Hajj, "Retired Soldiers Protest in Yemen," Associated Press, September 1, 2007.

4 Mohammed bin Sallam, "Protests Continue, Clerics Advise Government to Reform Situations," *Yemen Times*, November 11, 2007.

5 For more on the future of Yemen, see Gregory D. Johnsen, *Reforming Yemen: Foreign Aid and the Push For Democracy* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, Forthcoming).

6 "US aid for Yemen Linked to al-Qaeda Suspect," Agence France-Presse, October 29, 2007.



was depending, Yemen scrambled to prove to Washington that al-Badawi was still in prison. U.S. officials were taken on a prison tour to visit al-Badawi in his cell. More recently, the independent weekly *al-Wasat* reported that al-Badawi has once again been released from prison.<sup>7</sup> This report was immediately denied by the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>8</sup>

Whether or not al-Badawi is currently free is largely irrelevant. If he is not free he eventually will be, unless the United States continues to threaten Yemen with drastic cuts in aid money. As part of the deal that led to his surrender, Yemen promised al-Badawi his freedom in exchange for his commitment not to engage in violent activities within the borders of the state. This deal is similar to other agreements that Yemen has reached with some of the other escapees, as well as with imprisoned jihadists.<sup>9</sup> Yemen will appease the United States when it is forced to, but it is more worried about its reputation as an honest negotiator and its future ability to deter jihadists; it is not concerned with past attacks, but rather is determined to head off future attacks, such as the one in Mar'ib this past summer, which could further destabilize its economy.

Yemen's strategy seems clear. It will negotiate and release individuals who promise not to carry out operations within Yemen. Intentionally or not, this policy has had the effect of driving a wedge between al-Qa`ida's old guard and its younger, more radicalized members. The old guard, which experienced the crackdown and dismantling of its leadership in the first phase of the war, has largely embraced the government's offer, while the new generation has steadfastly refused to budge from its militarized stance.<sup>10</sup> During the past few months, the two sides have engaged in an increasingly acrimonious debate over the future of al-Qa`ida in Yemen. Fragments of this debate have emerged in public forums such as chat rooms and media outlets, but most of this discussion has remained private. What does seem clear, however, is that the two sides have broken with each other over the issue of carrying out attacks in Yemen. The new generation, as the July 2 attack on a tourist

caravan in Mar'ib made clear, is determined to strike whenever and wherever it can, while the old guard continues to call for caution and patience.

#### U.S. Policy Toward Yemen

The United States will only be successful in the second phase of the war against al-Qa`ida if it can convince Yemen that the interests of both countries converge when it comes to the terrorist group. This will not be accomplished easily. There are two critical points that the United States must recognize. First, what it wants Yemen to be capable of and what the Yemeni government is actually capable of are not the same. Second, despite its global standing, the United States is not the most influential country to Yemen. Saudi Arabia is much more important to Yemen's economic future and long-term stability than is the United States. Riyadh injects more money into Yemen both officially and unofficially—through payoffs to tribal leaders—than does any other country. There is also a feeling within Yemen that the United States and its aid may disappear when its security interests are no longer threatened. This is not the case for Saudi Arabia. Just as the United States uses regional neighbors in other parts of the world as intermediaries, so too must it utilize Saudi Arabia to help stabilize Yemen as well as assist it in combating al-Qa`ida.

Washington should make clear to Yemen that it will not allow it to become a failed state. Not only will this ensure greater Yemeni cooperation against al-Qa`ida, but it is also in the best long-term interests of the United States. It should also pressure Saudi Arabia to funnel all money into Yemen through the government, which will not only further stabilize the economy but also allow the central government greater control over its hinterlands. Only by guaranteeing the regime's survival will Sana`a be free to pursue the war against al-Qa`ida in Yemen in concert with the United States. Otherwise, it will be forced to rely on a haphazard policy of half-measures.

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## Southern Thailand Insurgency Fails to Achieve Popular Support

By Peter Chalk

THE SECURITY SITUATION in southern Thailand has elicited growing concern during the past four years as a wave of militant attacks have swept across the Malay Muslim provinces of Yala, Pattani<sup>1</sup> and Narathiwat.<sup>2</sup> Despite the growing violence, there is little indication that the region is on the verge of a mass uprising, not least because the current generation of insurgents has yet to gain a strong foothold of support among the local population. The militants' lack of popular traction provides Bangkok with an unprecedented opportunity to garner greater trust and legitimacy in the so-called "deep south" (and thereby marginalize extremist separatist sentiment), but only if indigenous Malay Muslims are allowed to integrate into the wider Thai polity on their own terms.

#### A Catalogue of Violence

In the 43 months from January 2004 to the end of August 2007, a total of 7,473 acts of violence were recorded in the Malay-dominated provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, leaving 2,566 dead (which equates to an average of roughly 60 fatalities a month) and 4,187 injured. Civilians have been hardest hit, accounting for nearly three-quarters of all casualties, with respective tallies for the Buddhist and Muslim communities amounting to 1,124 and 1,330 killed and 2,483 and 1,238 injured.<sup>3</sup> For a population

1 Malays spell Pattani with only one "t" in reference to the historical Kingdom of Patani Darussalam. "Pattani," which is used throughout this paper, is the official transliteration employed by the Thai state.

2 Overviews of the roots of Malay Muslim separatism in southern Thailand can be found in Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay Muslims of Southern Thailand* (Bangkok: The Khadi Research Institute, 1985); Thanet Aphornsuvan, *Origins of Malay-Muslim 'Separatism' in Southern Thailand*, Asia Research Institute Working Paper No. 32 (Singapore: Singapore National University, 2005); R.J. May, "The Religious Factor in Three Religious Minority Movements," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 13:4 (1992); and Omar Farouk, "The Historical and Transnational Dimensions of Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," in Lim Joo Jock and S. Vani eds., *Armed Separatism in Southern Thailand* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1984).

3 Personal interview, Pattani, Thailand, September 2007. These statistics are based on figures maintained by Professor Srisompob at Pattani Songkhla University (PSU), which are generally recognized to be the most

7 "Al-Sulta tafarij al-Badawi lil-murrah al-thaniyyah," *al-Wasat*, December 5, 2007.

8 "Al-dakhaliyyah nafit itlaq al-Badawi lil-murrah al-thaniyyah," *News Yemen*, December 5, 2007.

9 Gregory D. Johnsen, "Tracking Yemen's 23 Escaped Jihad Operatives - Part 2," *Terrorism Monitor* 5:19 (2007).

10 See, for example, the insightful article on the split between the two generations published by *al-Ghad*, July 4, 2007.



that numbers only 1.8 million,<sup>4</sup> these figures represent a considerable toll.

Besides the higher intensity of attacks, the nature of the current bout of instability in the south has been marked by an explicit religious undertone of a sort not apparent in past years. Reflective of this have been frequent attacks against drinking dens, gambling halls, karaoke bars and other establishments associated with Western “decadence” and secularism; the distribution of leaflets (allegedly printed in the northern

**“Despite its seriousness, there is no indication yet that the insurgency is on the verge of going ‘critical.’”**

Malaysian state of Kelantan) declaring that the Thai state is engaged in a systematic campaign to eradicate the Islamic faith and warning local Malays of severe reprisals if they do not adhere to traditional Muslim ways; and the increased targeting of monks and other Buddhist civilians—often through brutal means such as live burnings and beheadings—in an apparent effort to destroy the societal fabric by fostering communal fear, conflict and hatred.<sup>5</sup>

The heightened scale of unrest plaguing Bangkok’s southern border provinces has prompted growing concern that the Malay Muslim struggle is rapidly approaching a “tipping point” that could morph into a

full, mass-based conflict.<sup>6</sup> While such a scenario cannot be ruled out—the bulk of the local population clearly rejects the explicit assimilationist orientation that underlies the Thai concept of nation-building<sup>7</sup>—the possibility of an open-ended separatist war breaking out is being mitigated by the insurgency’s general failure to achieve any real degree of popular support.

#### **Insurgent Traction Among the Local Malay Muslim Population**

In contrast to past manifestations of the southern Thai conflict, there does not appear to be a concerted effort by the current militant generation to win over the hearts and minds of the indigenous populations across Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat. Indeed, other than repeatedly highlighting the presumed threat posed to Malay Muslim culture by a foreign and repressive Buddhist state, there has been little, if any, attempt by extremist entities to solicit widespread civic support through positive political propaganda or messaging.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the emphasis has revolved around intimidating the population through threats and directed acts of violence. Certainly, there has been no attempt to isolate local Malays from the effects of bombings and shootings—reflected in the number of Muslims that have been killed or injured in insurgent attacks—with resultant casualties either casually dismissed as collateral damage or weakly justified as the inevitable repercussions for failing to adhere to a “true” Islamic path.<sup>9</sup>

Critically, the army and police have largely failed to offset these coercive tactics by providing an adequate security environment on the ground. This has inevitably led to a situation whereby the local populace neither trusts the security forces nor believes it has any choice other than to comply with rebel orders and assist in their logistical and

operational efforts.<sup>10</sup> As one Pattani-based Muslim scholar explained to this author:

For the insurgents, there is no perceived need to win over the population, as the people tend to lack trust in the security forces; [the assumption is that] they will therefore gravitate to [the insurgents] by default. [Militant] propaganda strategy has, as a result, largely taken the form of capitalizing on the mistakes of the authorities.<sup>11</sup>

Although clearly motivated by fear, the bulk of Malays living in the border provinces have yet to be cowed into demanding outright independence. While palpable resentment over Bangkok’s mismanagement of the south definitely exists, separatist militants have not been able to effectively translate this to their advantage precisely because their strategy has relied on brutality and scaremongering. Perhaps the best indication of this is that overt symbols of the Thai polity (such as the national flag and posters of the royal family) not only remain in evidence, but are also largely accepted, while graffiti calling for a “Free Pattani” is noticeably absent.<sup>12</sup> This is not the type of environment that one would typically associate with a seething hotbed of regional secessionist sentiment.

#### **The Future**

Despite its seriousness, there is no indication yet that the insurgency is on the verge of going “critical.” Most Malay Muslims do not seem to want an independent state and reject the extreme and arbitrary nature of militant attacks. The one factor that could change this dynamic would be a major crackdown by the security forces that results in large-scale casualties, or an attempt to forcibly institute a non-Islamic credo in the region.

It remains to be seen how the new political environment that has been brought about in Thailand as a result of the September 2006 army coup will impact Bangkok’s overall response to the insurgency. Encouragingly, General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin, who orchestrated the military takeover and who has

comprehensive and accurate data set currently available.

4 Of the 1.8 million people in Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, 79 percent are Malay Muslim.

5 Personal interviews, Bangkok, Thailand, November 2005 and April 2006, and Bangkok and Pattani, Thailand, September 2007. At the time of writing, there were already signs that the insurgent sectarian-focused strategy was beginning to “work.” According to one Western official, indications of a far more radical stance within the Buddhist population had become apparent—especially in Yala—and were on the verge of spilling over into reprisal tit-for-tat killings. More seriously, allegations of the existence of an anti-Muslim vigilante force have surfaced. According to one Pattani-based academic, it is this militia that is primarily responsible for the spate of emergent attacks that have been directed at Islamic schools and mosques during the last several months.

6 Views of this sort have been expressed in numerous regional conferences on terrorism and security in South-east Asia attended by the author and have also featured in country assessments distributed by various think-tanks based in the region.

7 Three pillars underscore the Thai concept of nation-building: Monarchy, Religion (Buddhism) and (centralized) State.

8 According to one Western official based in Thailand, anecdotal reports began to surface in 2007 that Malay militants were engaging in mass round-ups of entire villages to forcibly impress the sanctity and legitimacy of their actions. Personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, September 2007.

9 Personal interviews, Pattani, Thailand, September 2006, and Bangkok and Pattani, Thailand, September 2007.

10 Personal interviews, Bangkok, Thailand, September 2007. Such perceptions are particularly strong given that most insurgent cells are located in urban areas (unlike the situation in the past when guerrilla groups operated from jungle hideouts), meaning that villagers have to interact with militants on a 24/7 basis.

11 Personal interview, Pattani, Thailand, September 2007.

12 Author observations during field research in Pattani and Yala, Thailand, September 2007.

been instrumental in appointing new members of an interim administration, has signaled that he is ready to negotiate with rebels in the south. Just as significant, his designated prime minister, Surayud Chulanont, has issued a public apology for past hard line government policies. Furthermore, in November 2006 he specifically affirmed that Islamic law should be given a bigger role in the south.<sup>13</sup>

These various gestures represent an abrupt change in tact from the non-compromising policies of the previous Thaksin Shinawatra administration.<sup>14</sup> If these gestures were followed up with a vigorous policy agenda that allows Malay Muslims to integrate into the wider Thai polity on their own terms—rather than one which merely presses a Bangkok-dictated process of forced assimilation—a viable foundation for genuine ethno-religious reconciliation could still emerge in the south.

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## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

December 1-2, 2007: Twelve members of al-Qa`ida in Iraq were apprehended by police in the al-Tash area in southern Ramadi, Anbar Province. During the arrests, two car bombs and multiple explosive belts were discovered and confiscated. – *al-Iraqiyah Television, December 2*

December 3, 2007: A suicide bomber targeted an Indian road construction company in Khash Rod district of the western Afghan province of Nimroz. Four Afghans were killed in the attack, including two police officers. – *Reuters, December 4*

December 3, 2007: Six people were killed in Pakistan's Balochistan Province as a bomb ripped through the Imdadul Uloom madrasa, which is located 15 kilometers away from the Qilla Saifullah bazaar. According to authorities, the bomb was concealed in a bundle of clothing and left in the school by an Afghan student. The motive for the attack was unknown. – *AFP, December 3*

December 3, 2007: According to an article by the London-based al-Quds Press, an intelligence official in Iraq's Anbar Province police force told the news agency that more than 150 Arab volunteers arrived in the country two weeks ago to join al-Qa`ida in Iraq. The fighters, who were mostly from Yemen, allegedly entered the country from the Syrian border, using false passports under the cover of returning refugees. – *al-Quds Press, December 3*

December 4, 2007: A female suicide bomber detonated herself at an army checkpoint in Peshawar, marking Pakistan's first recorded suicide attack by a woman. Other than the life of the bomber, there were no casualties from the incident. – *AP, December 4*

December 4, 2007: Islamist fighters kidnapped six tribal policemen and destroyed a security checkpoint near the Bajaur Agency city of Khar. The policemen belonged to Pakistan's tribesmen Levies force. – *AP, December 4*

December 4, 2007: A suicide car bomber attacked a NATO convoy near the Kabul airport. There were no NATO casualties in the attack, although at least 10 Afghan civilians were wounded. The Taliban claimed credit for the operation and said that it was a "welcome" message for U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who arrived in Kabul on December 3. – *Reuters, December 4*

December 4, 2007: The U.S. military announced that a key leader of al-Qa`ida in Iraq, Abu Maysara, was killed in Iraq last month. The Syrian leader was identified through DNA evidence after he was killed during a raid near Samarra. Abu Maysara was allegedly a senior adviser to Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the head of al-Qa`ida in Iraq, and was believed to have had an important role in the terrorist group's media campaign. – *BBC, December 4*

December 4, 2007: Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi released a statement on an Islamist website calling for a renewed bombing campaign against security forces. "The campaign should be based on explosives and its target should be

the apostates...wearing uniforms and all those who fight alongside the occupiers," the report read. "Every soldier is to detonate at least three bombs by the end of the campaign," which is supposed to continue through January.

December 4, 2007: A group calling itself the Islamic Shiite Resistance in Iraq posted a videotape of a British national held captive. It demanded that British forces pull their troops out of Iraq, yet did not specify what would happen to the hostage if the demands were not met. Hostage videos posted by Shi`a groups are less common than those posted by al-Qa`ida and other Sunni militant groups.

December 4, 2007: Kyodo News agency released a report revealing that in late 2001 Usama bin Ladin considered damaging Japan's economy by attacking tankers en route to the island. The report quoted a former guard of Bin Ladin, who said that the al-Qa`ida leader was frustrated over Japan's support of the war on terrorism. – *Bloomberg, December 6*

December 4, 2007: British police arrested two men on suspicion of the "commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism," part of the UK's Terrorism Act. The men were arrested at their homes in northwest and west London. – *BBC, December 5*

December 4, 2007: The U.S. Treasury Department imposed financial sanctions on Abdelmalek Droukdel, the leader of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb, which was formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). Any of Droukdel's assets under U.S. jurisdiction will be frozen. – *Reuters, December 4*

December 5, 2007: The Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide car bomb attack on a minibus filled with Afghan soldiers, which resulted in 13 fatalities, including civilians. The attack occurred in the Chihulsutoon area, south of Kabul. – *AP, December 5*

December 5, 2007: A state court in Germany sentenced three Middle Eastern men to prison for providing assistance to al-Qa`ida. Evidence presented in the trial showed that the men did not plan on conducting attacks in Germany, but instead wanted to use the country as a safe haven to plan attacks and raise funds for al-Qa`ida operations. The leader of the cell, Ibrahim Mohamed Khalil, had received training in an al-Qa`ida camp in Afghanistan. – *AP, December 5*

<sup>13</sup> Personal interviews, Bangkok, Thailand, September 2007; "Thai Advocates Islamic Law for Far South," *New York Times*, November 8, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Thaksin consistently refused to engage in talks aimed at granting the Malay Muslim provinces greater autonomy, opting instead to deal with the situation in the south via a purely military-oriented approach.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

December 6, 2007: The U.S. Treasury Department placed seven “former (Iraqi) regime elements and others supporting the Iraqi insurgency out of Syria” on a list that prohibits U.S. citizens from having any business dealings with them. The individuals were identified as Fawzi Mutlaq al-Rawi, Hasan Hashim Khalaf al-Dulaymi, Ahmed Watban Ibrahim Hasan al-Tikriti, Ahmad Muhammad Yunis al-Ahmad, Sa’ad Muhammad Yunis al-Ahmad, Thabet al-Duri and Hatem Hamdan al-Azawi. - *Reuters, December 6*

December 6, 2007: The Iraqi army announced the capture of Hatim Sultan al-Hadidi, who they identified as a key member of al-Qa`ida in Iraq and the operative who was responsible for the killings of 23 Yazidi workers in April. Al-Hadidi was captured in Mosul. - *Xinhua, December 6*

December 6, 2007: A Philippine court convicted 14 members of the Abu Sayyaf Group to life in prison for their involvement in the 2001 kidnapping of 20 people on the western resort island of Palawan. Two Americans were killed during the ordeal, one of which was beheaded by his captors. - *Voice of America, December 6*

December 7, 2007: A female suicide bomber killed at least 16 people in Muqdadhiya, 60 miles north of Baghdad, in an attack that targeted an “awakening council” office. The local police force identified the bomber as Suhaila Ali, a local woman who was formerly a member of the Ba’ath Party. The woman’s three sons were all members of al-Qa`ida who had been killed by U.S. forces. - *CNN, December 7; Guardian Unlimited, December 8*

December 8, 2007: According to the U.S. military, 12 suspected al-Qa`ida in Iraq militants were killed, and 13 more detained, in central and northern Iraq.

December 8, 2007: *Al-Quds al-Arabi* reported that Palestinian sources revealed to the newspaper that al-Qa`ida militants were now operating extensively in certain areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The unidentified sources claimed that some members of Hamas’ military wing were working with al-Qa`ida. - *al-Quds al-Arabi, December 8; Jerusalem Post, December 8*

December 9, 2007: An important U.S. ally in Iraq, Babil Province Police Chief Qais al-Mamouri, was assassinated when five successive roadside bombs exploded near his vehicle at the entrance of Hilla. Investigators

are unclear as to whether the attack was executed by al-Qa`ida or by Shi’a militias. - *The Christian Science Monitor, December 10*

December 9, 2007: A roadside bomb detonated on an Algerian highway, with the intended target a bus filled with employees of the Russian energy company Stroitransgaz. There were no reported injuries. The attack took place west of Algiers, near the town of Bavaiche. - *Itar-Tass, December 10*

December 10, 2007: NATO and Afghan government forces retook Musa Qala in Afghanistan, which had been controlled by the Taliban since February. - *The Times [London], December 10*

December 11, 2007: Two car bombs ripped through downtown Algiers, killing approximately 60 people. The attacks targeted the constitutional court in the Algiers neighborhood of Ben Aknoun, in addition to the city’s UN headquarters—at least 11 UN workers were killed. Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility. - *CNN, December 11; Bloomberg, December 12*

December 11, 2007: Four Islamic militants were sentenced to prison in Indonesia for committing terrorist acts. The attacks include bombing a market and beheading three Christian schoolgirls. - *AP, December 12*

December 11, 2007: At least five people were killed, including three Ethiopian soldiers, during an attack in Mogadishu. The casualties occurred during a 30-minute gunbattle that erupted after a roadside bomb targeted an Ethiopian convoy. - *AP, December 11*

December 12, 2007: Three car bombs exploded in the southern Iraqi city of Amara, killing at least 27 people. - *CNN, December 12*

December 13, 2007: Pakistani authorities announced that they had foiled an al-Qa`ida plot to assassinate President Pervez Musharraf. Reports state that the assassination was planned for Musharraf’s next visit to Karachi, where a bridge connecting the airport to the city was to be destroyed while Musharraf’s convoy traveled over. - *Bloomberg, December 13*